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Philippines: Reports of corruption and bribery within the police force; government response; frequency of convictions of members of the police force accused of criminal activity (2004 - 2006)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The Report on the *Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer 2004* revealed that Filipinos considered the police to be the most corrupt institution or sector in their country (TI 9 Dec. 2004, 11). The following year, the police dropped to second place in the ranking of corrupt institutions as perceived by the public, behind political parties and the legislature, which tied for first place (ibid. 9 Dec. 2005, 18). Starting in 2000, surveys of efforts made by public and private agencies to combat corruption were conducted by the Quezon City-based non-profit social research organization, Social Weather Stations (SWS n.d.). The results indicated that the Philippine National Police (PNP) received a "bad" rating in 2005, a rating it retained in 2006 (*Manila Standard* 7 July 2006; *The Manila Times* 8 July 2006).

Both Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and the chief director of the PNP, Edgar Aglipay, have acknowledged that corruption is a problem within the police force (Philippines 17 July 2003; INQ7 3 Jan. 2005; *Manila Standard* 11 Dec. 2004). In a 2003 statement, President Arroyo called police corruption a "serious problem" that was negatively affecting national security (Philippines 17 July 2003), while Aglipay remarked that "persistent allegations" of police corruption were contributing to a "crisis of confidence" within the force (INQ7 3 Jan. 2005). According to Aglipay, police on vehicle traffic duty often sought bribes from drivers who were stopped for violating the rules of the road (*Manila Standard* 11 Dec. 2004). The chief of police also agreed with findings by Transparency International that extortion and arrest and kidnapping were among the "most damaging" acts of corruption committed by members of the police force (INQ7 31 Jan. 2005). In 2006, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported that police officers in Mindanao were accused of selling their guns to a pawnshop (29 June 2006). Police groups have pointed to inadequate salaries and poor working conditions as the main causes of corruption within the force (BBC 29 June 2006). *The Guardian* reported that in March 2005, all 529 officers in the North Abra provincial force were relocated after allegations of corruption and ties to organized crime emerged (10 May 2005).

Corruption within the police force was also cited as one of the contributing factors to the problem of kidnapping by gangs in the country (*Philippine Daily Inquirer* 17 Mar. 2006). The risk consultancy firm Pacific Strategies and Assessments (PSA) reported that officers of the PNP have allegedly colluded with kidnapping gangs in Manila (ibid.).

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "police officers are frequently named as suspected gunmen" in cases of violence against journalists in the Philippines (CPJ 2006). Former police officer Guillermo Wapile was convicted in the murder of Edgar Damalerio, an editor and radio commentator, in 2002 (ibid.). Relatives of Klein Cantoneros, another radio commentator who had accused local officials of corruption and who was killed in 2005, alleged that police officers in Dipolog City were linked to the crime (*The Guardian* 10 May 2005). While claiming allegations of police involvement in violence against journalists were inaccurate, the senior superintendent of police, Pedro Tango, told *The Guardian* newspaper that the police could not deny that "some military and police personnel have been involved in some cases" (ibid.). Citing their own investigation into the killings of journalists in the Philippines, the CPJ concluded that "rampant corruption" was among the factors contributing to "deadly conditions for the press" (CPJ 2006). The chairperson of the National Union for Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) blamed the high number of unsolved murder cases involving journalists and the low rate of convictions on links between politicians and law enforcement officials (*The Guardian* 10 May 2005). The director of the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism pointed out that most of the killings were "related to issues of local corruption and local mafia" (ibid.).

In 2005, PNP chief Edgar Aglipay outlined the PNP anti-corruption plan, including how the police force would address corruption within its ranks, and provided a copy to President Arroyo (INQ7 31 Jan. 2005; *BusinessWorld* 1 Feb. 2005). While information on the exact provisions of the plan was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate, the newspaper *BusinessWorld* reported that one of the major measures set out in the plan was the introduction of an independent internal audit office designed to monitor all financial transactions by the PNP (ibid. 1 Mar. 2005). A December 2004 news article suggests that the Internal Affairs Service (IAS) was ineffective in its mandate of investigating irregularities inside the police force and had been unsuccessful,

particularly in cases involving top officials of the PNP, as a result of its lack of independence (*Philippine Daily Inquirer* 13 Dec. 2004).

As part of his anti-corruption plan, Aglipay stated that all police officers would attend "values and leadership training" (INQ7 3 Jan. 2005). In December 2004, the *Manila Standard* reported that Aglipay had sent roughly 500 police officers to the Subic reformatory school for a month-long training course on becoming "service-oriented" (11 Dec. 2004). Aglipay also removed the right of the traffic police to stop traffic violators in order to reduce the problem of bribery (*Manila Standard* 11 Dec. 2004). In early 2004, the PNP signed an agreement with the Civic Organization Coalition Against Corruption (CAC) which provided the CAC with observer status on the PNP Bids and Awards Committee (*BusinessWorld* 21 Dec. 2004). The arrangement was designed to allow the CAC to monitor procurement procedures within the PNP and to assist the PNP in strengthening its corruption prevention guidelines (ibid.).

Further information on police corruption, including the frequency of convictions of police officers accused of criminal activity, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Asian Development Bank, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Human Rights Watch, Philippine Commission on Human Rights, Philippine National Police, United States Department of State.

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